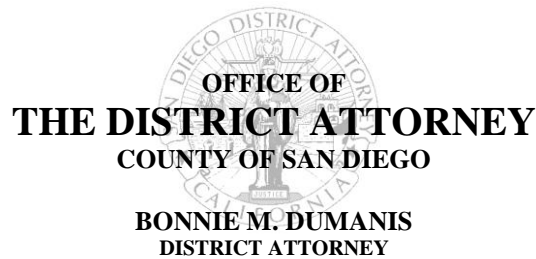


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# DA Dumanis Files Multiple Felony Charges in South Bay Corruption Case

## *Yearlong Investigation Reveals Pervasive 'Pay-for-Play' Culture*

San Diego County District Attorney [Bonnie M. Dumanis](#) today announced criminal charges against five defendants in a wide-ranging public corruption case involving Sweetwater Union High School District School Board members, the former district superintendant and a South Bay contractor—all of whom were involved in a ‘pay-for-play’ culture with businesses that were awarded voter-approved bond projects worth hundreds of millions of dollars. The case is believed to be the largest of its kind in San Diego County.

“The widespread corruption we uncovered during our investigation of this case is outrageous and shameful,” said DA Dumanis. “For years, public officials regularly accepted what amounted to bribes in exchange for their votes on multi-million dollar construction projects. The corruption was nothing short of systemic. Today’s charges begin the process of holding those officials accountable for their actions on behalf of the taxpayers, who footed the bill for lavish dinners, concert and theater tickets, and much more.”

Defendants charged include former Sweetwater Union High School Superintendent Jesus Gandara; school board trustees Arlie Ricasa, Pearl Quiñones, and former 16-year board member Greg Sandoval. Also charged is Henry Amigable, a contractor who worked for a construction company hired by the school district.

Felony charges include bribery, perjury, filing a false instrument, influencing an elected official and obtaining a thing of value to influence a member of a legislative body. Additional misdemeanor charges include wrongful influence. If convicted of the charges, defendants face between four and seven years in state prison, as well as fines.

The defendants from the school district, who were entrusted with making decisions on behalf of the best interests of students and schools, received tens of thousands of dollars worth of meals, tickets and hotel stays from construction companies vying for voter-approved bond projects. Shortly after board members received financial favors, they approved contracts with the contractors for bond projects stemming from Sweetwater’s \$644 million Proposition O.

Between 2008 and 2011, the defendants frequented San Diego-area restaurants with Amigable and others racking up hundreds of dollars in food and drinks at a time, in some cases reaching more than \$1,000 per outing. Defendants were given Los Angeles Lakers playoff tickets,

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concert tickets, theater tickets, Rose Bowl tickets, Southwest Airlines tickets and a trip to Napa Valley. Officials did not report the gifts on their Statement of Economic Interest, as required by state law. In other instances, administrators and trustees solicited cash for their children's beauty pageants or field trips. They also demanded campaign donations and other favors.

"This case is an excellent example of our office's commitment to prosecuting public integrity cases," Dumanis said. "It also shows how such investigations are, by their very nature, tedious and lengthy. We proceed carefully on public integrity cases and often, the public isn't aware of the work we're doing behind the scenes. But when we discover criminal activity, we act to hold defendants accountable."

The defendants are scheduled to be arraigned on January 13th at 1:30 p.m. in Department 50 of the San Diego County Superior Court downtown.

The District Attorney's investigation is ongoing and additional charges are possible.

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